DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 306 686 EA 020 955

AUTHOR Thomson, James R., Jr.; Schuck, Robert F.
TITLE Variables Associated with First Year Teacher Morale Which Can Be Identified in a Teacher Education Program.
PUB DATE Nov 87
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (16th, Mobile, AL, November 11-13, 1987).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Beginning Teachers; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Self Concept; Standardized Tests; *Teacher Characteristics; *Teacher Education Programs; *Teacher Morale
IDENTIFIERS ACT Assessment; *Mississippi

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a study of the personal variables associated with first-year teacher morale that can be identified early in the training programs of novice teachers. This study is based on data derived from 96 (76.6 percent) of the graduates teaching in Mississippi. Data were collected through the use of five special instruments: (1) "Personal Trait Inventory"; (2) "Myself as a Teacher Scale"; (3) "Purdue Teacher Inventory"; (4) "American College Test" (ACT); and the (5) "College Outcome Measures Project." The data show that beginning teachers' morale at the end of their first year of teaching is related to their self-image as teachers. Personal traits of active/enthusiastic/flexible and ingenious/industrious behaviors are good predictors of their later morale. General cognitive achievement as indicated by ACT scores, as well as gender and age, are also important predictors of their satisfaction with teaching. Appended are six references and two tables. (SI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED306686

VARIABLES ASSOCIATED WITH FIRST YEAR TEACHER MORALE WHICH CAN BE IDENTIFIED IN A TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

James R. Thomson, Jr.
Director of Student Teaching/Certification
Mississippi State University
Box 5365
Mississippi State, MS 39762

Robert F. Schuck, Dean
College of Education and Human Services
Rhode Island College

Paper presented at the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the
Mid-South Educational Research Association, Mobile, Alabama

November, 1987

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

James R. Thompson, Jr.

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EA 020 955

First year teachers often experience a reality shock when they enter the classroom for the first time. Teaching real students in the real world is unlike the job expectations which the novice teachers have developed. By the end of the first year of teaching, teachers often express a drop in morale relative to their work role and their proficiency as teachers.

Teacher educators as noted by Schalock (1979) must assume more responsibility toward assisting alumni of their undergraduate programs to achieve more positively integrated career development patterns. Part of this supportive process involves the early identification of personal traits associated with early burnout in teachers or loss of job satisfaction. Much burnout in teachers, of course, is associated with job hindrances uniquely characteristic of specific teaching assignments which vary from school to school. If variables predicting decline in morale after teaching can be isolated, then, perhaps intervention strategies may be developed to assist these young teachers in coping more effectively with reality shock.

Robvinowitz and Rosebaum (1960) found a decline in teacher attitudes toward teaching after three years. In a pilot study Thomson and Handley (1986) reported that young teachers' concept of self as teachers was a strong correlate of beginning teachers' morale.

The Problem

The research question in this study was: Can personal variables associated with first year teacher morale be identified early in the training programs of novice teachers? Specific answers to the following subquestions were pursued:

1. What correlation, if any, exists between each of the following measures of overall teacher morale of teachers at the end of their first year of teaching?
   A. Self concept as measured by the Myself as a Teacher Scale.
   B. Personal traits describing the following behaviors as measured by the Personal Trait Inventory:
      (1) Active/enthusiastic/flexible
      (2) Ingenious/industrious
      (3) Original/divergent.
   C. Cognitive variables measured by the overall ACT score and the National Teacher Examination subscales.
   D. Gender
   E. Age
2. What combination of the above variables measured early in the career training of inservice teachers best predicts their overall teaching morale at the end of their first year of teaching?

Research Procedures

An Overview

Data for the predictor variables of personal traits, self concept, and National Teacher Examination scores were collected for subjects during their senior year in their undergraduate teacher preparation program. ACT scores achieved prior to college entry and writing and speaking scores from the COMP examination taken during their junior year were derived from the academic records of the young teachers. Then, at the end of their first year of teaching, the novice teachers were mailed an instrument to assess their morale toward teaching. The dependent variable in this correlational study was the

overall teacher morale score. The personal trait measures, self concept scores, NTE scores, ACT scores and COMP scores served as predictor or independent variables in this study.

Subjects

The potential subjects for this study consisted of 126 secondary education graduates of their preservice teacher education programs from a land grant institution during the academic years of 1984-85 and 1985-86. During the month of April at the end of their first year of teaching in Mississippi, these beginning teachers were mailed a copy of the Purdue Teacher Opinionaire and requested to respond to it. This study is based on data derived from 96 (76.0%) of the graduates teaching in Mississippi.

Instruments

Data were collected through the use of three special instruments, the Personal Trait Inventory, the Myself as a Teacher Scale, and the Purdue Teacher Inventory. Also, data collected through use of the American College Test (ACT) and the College Outcome Measures Project (COMP) test were employed as predictors in the study.

The Personal Trait Inventory, validated by Thomson and Handley (1984), was administered to subjects as preservice teachers to secure a self assessment of their personal traits. This instrument yields 10 factors or dimensions of personality traits, as obtained by an orthoblique rotation of responses to 62 adjective items in which subjects evaluate their own personal traits on a five point Likert-type scale. In the present study three of the factors, those describing teacher behaviors related active/enthusiastic/flexible, ingenious/industrious, and original/divergent traits, were included as predictor variables. The adjectives used as content for the items of this instrument were derived from the work of Domino (1970).

The Myself as Teacher Scale developed by Handley and Thomson (1986) was used to assess the self concepts of preservice teachers of themselves as teachers. Following the surface trait or situational perception of self concept, as opposed to self concept as a source trait, this instrument in 32 Likert-type items yields a behavioral factor in which teachers assess their personal characteristics on a five point scale ranging from "among the best" to "among the poorest" of teachers. The MATS has an internal consistency (alpha) reliability of .92.

The Purdue Teacher Opinionaire, administered to the subjects after one year of teaching, is an instrument widely used for assessing teacher morale. This instrument dimensions morale relative to several subscales, but only the total teacher morale scores was considered as a criterion variable in this study. Teacher morale in this case appears to refer to general satisfaction with teaching, rapport with colleagues and the community and satisfaction with variables such as work load, salary and teacher status. The reliability coefficient for the total instrument is .87 .

The American College Test scores which are used as college admission criteria in Mississippi and scores on the writing and speaking divisions of the College Outcome Measure Project tests were also secured from the students' records. The COMP test, published by the ACT group, is used to secure data needed for admission to teacher education programs in Mississippi.

Methods of Data Analysis

To establish the independent relationships of predictor variables to the beginning teachers' overall morale score, Pearson product moment correlations were computed. Then, a stepwise multiple regression statistical model was employed to determine the best combination of variables for predicting the morale. The variables were allowed to enter the regression equation in the

order of the magnitude of their partial correlation with the residualized morale scores at each step of the analysis. A variable was retained in the predictor set so long as it was associated with at least one percent of the variance in the criterion variable.

Results of Study

The significance of 12 cognitive and affective variables as predictors of beginning teachers' morale was investigated. Correlation coefficients derived from these analyses are presented in Table 1. Ten of the variables studied were found to be related to the morale measures. Variables of self concept as a teacher, active/enthusiastic/flexible traits, overall ACT score, and National Teacher Examination scores in the areas of general knowledge, speciality area and professional knowledge were found to be significantly correlated in the positive direction with the teachers' morale scores at the .01 level. Self assessed personal traits relative to original/divergent behaviors were found to be negatively correlated with beginning teachers' morale at that same level of significance. Variables of gender and age of teachers were also positive correlates of beginning teacher morale; i.e., beginning teachers who were older and were women appeared to score higher on the morale scale. At the .05 level, self-assessed traits of ingenious/industrious behaviors were also correlated with morale. The variables of writing and speaking achievement as measured by the COMP test were not significantly related to teacher morale.

When these 12 potential predictors were entered into the regression model, 50.6% of the variance in teacher morale scores were found to be associated with a set of six variables. Over 27% of this variance was related to the Myself as a Teacher scores from the novice teachers' self concept assessment made during their junior year. Age of teachers predicted an additional 6.7% of the

variance in morale scores. Active/enthusiastic/flexible traits of the teachers explained another 3.6% of the variance. An additional 3.6% of the beginning teachers' morale was predicted by their overall ACT scores. Also, gender was associated with 2.5% of the variance (females scoring higher). The last variable to enter the regression was the ingenious/industrious trait factor of the Personal Trait Inventory. At this last stage of the model, over 6.2% of the variance in teacher morale was found to be associated with this self-assessed trait of the young teachers. These data are shown in Table 2.

Implications of Study

These data show that beginning teachers' morale at the end of their first year of teaching are related to their image of themselves as teachers developed early in their teacher preparation programs. Also, personal traits of active/enthusiastic/flexible and ingenious/industrious behaviors are good predictors of their later morale. General cognitive achievement as indicated by ACT scores, as well as gender and age, are also important predictors of their satisfaction with teaching.

Of course no causal relationship can be inferred from these data but the importance of novice teachers' developing a strong concept of self as a teacher during undergraduate studies is evident. Data from this study also support earlier findings (Thomson & Handley, 1974) of negative relationships between creative behaviors of young teachers and their adaptability to the real world of teaching. Young teachers who demonstrate more original and divergent behaviors display less satisfaction with teaching than do their counterparts who rate themselves lower on the creativity scales.

As illustrated by the positive correlations between NTE, ACT and morale scores for these teachers, it appears that there is also a relationship between cognitive achievement and teacher morale. This relationship has not been previously reported in the literature.

Teacher educators concerned with the career development patterns of their alumni need to study these relationships very carefully, particularly those between creative behaviors of young teachers and their later job satisfaction.

Table 1

Simple Correlates with Morale of First Year Teachers

Predictor Variables	r
Myself as a Teacher (Self Concept)	.52**
PTI: Active/enthusiastic/flexible traits	.49**
PTI: Ingenious/industrious traits	.24**
PTI: Original/divergent traits	-.26**
Overall ACT score	.40**
NTE: General knowledge	.37**
NTE: Specialty area	.34**
NTE: Professional knowledge	.33**
Gender	.29**
Age	.38**
COMP: Writing	.14
COMP: Speaking	.16

*$p \leq .05$
**$p \leq .01$

Table 2

Predicting First Year Teachers' Morale

Predictors	R	R^2	R^2 Added	F to Enter
Myself as a Teacher	.5201	.2705	.2705	21.18*
Age	.5806	.3371	.0666	12.19**
PTI: Active/enthusiastic/ flexible	.6186	.3827	.0362	5.62*
Overall ACT	.6473	.4190	.0363	5.94*
Gender	.6662	.4439	.0249	4.19*
PTI: Ingenious/industrious	.7173	.5062	.0623	9.86**

*$p \leq .05$
**$p \leq .01$

REFERENCES

Domino, G. 1970. Identification of potentially creative persons from the adjective check list. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 35, 48-51.

Handley, H. M. & Thomson, J. R., Jr. 1986. The Myself as a Teacher Scale. Paper presented at the Holmes Group of Universities Regional Meeting, Houston, TX.

Robvinowitz, W. & Rosenbaum, I. 1960. Teaching experience and teachers' attitudes. The Elementary School Journal, 60, 313-319.

Schalock, D. 1979. Research on teacher relations. In Berliner, D. C. (Ed.). Review of research in education, 7, 362-417.

Thomson, J. R., Jr. & Handley, H. M. 1984. Construction and validation of an instrument to measure flexibility traits of preservice teachers. Paper presented at the Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Education Association, New Orleans.

Thomson, J. R., Jr. & Handley, H. M. 1986. Personal traits serving as predicting of first-year teachers' morale. Paper presented at the Fifteenth Mid-South Educational Research Association Conference, Memphis.